

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I agree with the following statement prepared by PIRG members, and I want to add my own voice to this. I sincerely believe that the media have played an extensive role in "dumbing down" the campaigns of candidates for public offices. We hear only negative ads--what someone is not, or how someone is lying. Where is the truth? Where is the record?

Furthermore, I believe that politics is in a state of fear--politicians do not encourage us with truth or facts, nor do they respond to criticism any longer. They just talk a big talk, and it carries through because they do what they want before the media can get over its daze. Empty words and propaganda are the most powerful tools in campaigns today, as it brainwashes people into very limited thinking.

TV has a huge role to play in this, and it should serve the greater good of the public, instead of pandering to any selfish, negative ad paid for with thousands or millions of dollars. I believe a minimum of three hours could be spent easily (especially in election times) to devote to issues, facts, and even a forum for opposing viewpoints to be weighed with an even hand.

Here, now, follows the PIRG draft, with which I wholeheartedly agree. It is worth noting here that I do not consider myself conservative or liberal, and that I believe in the truth before I believe in propaganda.

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As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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